

# Precinct Reporter

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## San Bernardino Homeless and Proposition 1C

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Inland Empire housing is considered more affordable than most other places lately, but San Bernardino, perhaps more than any other city in the county, has felt the bite of the high cost housing for its low income population.

The shortage of housing in recent years has driven prices off the charts, and the homeless into the streets.

"The demand for housing drives up the cost, that you can't control, but cities need to look at the possibility of having enough housing for people within the community," said Al Twine, president of the board of the Community Action Partnership.

"We just need more housing for our homeless people, and need more shelter for women with families, single and homeless women with children. We can always use more housing," he said.

Sounds simple enough, but affordable housing is California's greatest oxymoron.

If Proposition 1C passes in November, it's about the only assurance this election that at least some new housing will be available for low income people. The state would get a go-ahead to sell \$2.85 billion in bonds to jumpstart 13 new and existing housing and development programs, which will open competition for developers through a grant process.

Patricia Nickols, director of the county's Community Action Partnership, said that the proposition is long overdue.

"What we're hearing from our homeless providers is that the need has increased. We've been through this dramatic change in the housing costs and that affected a lot of people," she said.

Part of the answer to address the increased homelessness is an integrated social services mall for the

county that has been in the making, but slow, as plans have stalled for quite a while in the bureaucracy.

Nickols said despite the roadblocks along the way, the agency has identified a location and is awaiting HUD's final approval this week. They have signed a lease agreement for the facility.

If all goes as planned, she hopes the mall will be operational by mid-2007, and set up to accommodate their partner agencies to start providing services. In the beginning when they received the award, she said they were excited, and she was certain it would be off the ground by now.

But the time requirements and the bureaucracy are thick.

"It's just getting things through the process," she said. "You have no site control, there's so many requirements you have to meet in getting the federal funding. It takes time."

Nickols said the agency continues to empower people through CAP's Inland Empire Individual Development Account, which offers a matching funds program for low income people, and helps them contribute up to \$6,000 in savings. The money can be used for housing, business startup or higher education, she said.

"Whatever amount you're able to save up to with a ceiling of \$2,000, we match it two to one," she said.

Right now, there are 45 people in that program that includes free classes with business plans, quick books and market analysis in a partnership with the Inland Empire Women's Business Center.

"But what we're finding is that once they've completed the asset goal to purchase a home, they're having issues with affording the housing," she said. "We know it's become more and more difficult."

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## San Bernardino Homeless

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Regarding Proposition 1C, Nickols said CAP supports anything that will help increase housing that is so out of reach for most low income.

Just how bad the homeless numbers have become over the years should be more apparent come January when the agency begins its Point in Time HUD update of the numbers of San Bernardino County homelessness.

Housing for the homeless or low income hasn't been on the ballot since Proposition 46 passed over three years ago by voters that opened doors for over 25,000 people to receive down payment assistance for the purchase of their homes. That proposition supported other homeless services, homeless shelters, rental units, and low income housing, but the money is fast running out.

Of the \$2.85 billion provided by

Proposition 1C, \$640 million will go to direct funding for emergency shelters and affordable homes for homeless families, battered women, emancipated foster youth and the disabled. Remaining money goes for a variety of programs, including assistance for first time homebuyers, infrastructure for infill development that supports building up affordable housing in existing communities.

Sam Delson, spokesperson for the Yes on Proposition 1C in Sacramento, said that statewide shelters are spilling over with homeless, and while there are problems with the one measure, it will make a significant dent.

"Every new shelter space means one more woman and her children can escape daily violence," he said. "Every rental home will mean one more senior couple can afford their prescription medication."